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PRE- AND POST-CANONICAL PASSION STORIES

Insights into the Development of Christian Discourse on the Death of Jesus

The recent researches carried out by Helmut Koester, John Dominic Crossan and Marianne Sawicki have helped to put into a new light the vanishing silhouette of the pre-Markan passion narratives. Koester and Crossan have stressed the contribution of the Gospel of Peter *as an autonomous witness, independent from the canonical gospels. Sawicki has elaborated the hypothesis of a practice developed out of the funerary laments performed by the women of the Jerusalem community. Finally, Crossan has tried to reconcile both approaches in his monograph on* The Birth of Christianity, *published in 1998. There, he proposes to attribute the authorship of the narrative component to the women of the earliest community, while the men would be responsible for the exegetical contribution. In the present essay, I argue that we should reconsider the degree of originality and antiquity of the* Gospel of Peter *– or at least what has survived. Additionally, the comparison between some passages and details of the passions according to Mark and to the* Book of the Cock *(an apocryphal passion story of the fifth/sixth century) is especially useful to bring out the traces of a pre-Markan writing that we could qualify, with Hélène Cixous, as "feminine." This evidence confirms the broad outline of the reconstructions undertaken by Koester, Crossan and Sawicki.*

*Les travaux récents d'Helmut Koester, John Dominic Crossan et Marianne Sawicki ont contribué à éclairer d'une lumière nouvelle les contours évanescents des récits de la passion pré-marcienne. Koester et Crossan ont revalorisé, d'abord, l'apport de l'*Évangile de Pierre *en tant que témoin indépendant des évangiles canoniques. Sawicki a défendu, ensuite, l'hypothèse de l'existence d'une complainte funèbre prononcée et mise en scène, à l'origine, par les femmes de la communauté de Jérusalem. Crossan a essayé de réunir, enfin, les deux approches dans un ouvrage consacré à* La naissance du christianisme, *publié en 1998, dans lequel il propose d'attribuer la maternité des éléments narratifs aux femmes de la communauté primitive, tandis que la paternité de la composante exégétique reviendrait aux hommes. Dans la présente étude, après avoir ramené la contribution de l'*Évangile de Pierre *– ou de ce qu'il en reste – à des proportions plus raisonnables,*

je compare certains passages et détails des récits de la passion selon Marc et de celle selon le Livre du coq (un récit apocryphe de la passion du V^e-VI^e siècle). Cette démarche permet de faire mieux ressortir les traces d'une écriture pré-marcienne que l'on pourrait qualifier, avec Hélène Cixous, de « féminine », ce qui confirme les grandes lignes des reconstructions entreprises par Koester, Crossan et Sawicki.

O my mother, storm-tossed and
distressed, what will you do when the
word reaches you? 'Delight of my eyes,
crown of my head,' you will mourn for
*me with flowing tears.**

I. Searching for the Earliest Passion Stories

The origins of Jesus' passion and resurrection narratives in the canonical gospels are relatively obscure and disputed.[1] A

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* From the *Dirge of Moses Remos*, edited and translated by T. Carmi (Carmi Charney), *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 439. Moses Remos (c. 1406-30) was a Jewish physician accused of having poisoned a Christian patient and executed at the age of twenty-four in Palermo. The present essay is part of a larger project on the passion narrative of the apocryphal *Book of the Cock* (see below, n. 45) sponsored by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Ottawa). A preliminary version of it ("D'un récit de la Passion [Marc 14-16] à l'autre [*Livre du Coq*]: De la quête d'un sens théologique à la recherche d'un effet dramatique") was presented at the conference *La Bible en récit*, organized by the *Institut romand des sciences bibliques* (IRSB) and the *Réseau de recherche en analyse narrative des textes bibliques* (RRENAB) at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland), March 2002 (the proceedings are in press). I would like to express my gratitude to Albert Frey, Jean-Daniel Kaestli (IRSB), Elizabeth Parton (Ottawa), and Claudio Zamagni (Lausanne) for their contributions to this article. I would clarify that the terms "canonical" and "apocryphal" (rather than "intra-" and "extra-canonical") are used here for the sake of convenience, as their historical and even theological value is of course questionable, at least up to the end of the second century C.E. Unless otherwise stated, all the translations of the ancient texts are my own.

1. For the canonical narratives, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1994). For the apocryphal texts, see Maurice Geerard, *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992); Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (trans. R. McL. Wilson; Cambridge: Clarke; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991-92 [based on the sixth German edition, 1989-90]); J. Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993 [revised and newly

large majority of specialists generally assume that the text of Mark 14-16 is the oldest written passion story preserved among the New Testament writings. According to the well-known "two documents" theory, the other synoptic gospels would have followed the guidelines of Mark's version here more than elsewhere, Matthew 26-28 in a rather faithful manner and Luke 22-24 more freely.[2] Even the authors of John 18-20 and possibly of the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* would have known and built upon the basic elements of the same original story.[3] However, the question of the origins of this passion story according to Mark is completely open. Is it the author of the second gospel who is primarily responsible for such a new creation?[4] Or, more plausibly, has the evangelist made use of an oral source or tradition, or even a preexisting written document? Further, if we admit this possibility, can we trust in Mark's faithfulness and qualify him as a "conservative redactor"? In other words, is it still possible to see the shadows of this hypothetical pre-Markan passion narrative behind the actual text of Mark 14-16?[5]

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translated edition of Montague R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924)]); François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain, eds., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, vol. 1 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442; Paris: Gallimard, 1997 [vol. 2, edited by P. Geoltrain and J.-D. Kaestli, is forthcoming]).

2. In spite of the criticism recently voiced by Mark S. Goodacre (*The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002]) and other scholars, "neo-Griesbachian" theories or "Mark without Q" hypotheses are raising more composition and narrative problems than they solve. For a defense of Q as well as an overview of the ongoing debate, see now Robert A. Derrenbacker, Jr. and John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, "Self-Contradiction in the IQP? A reply to Michael Goulder," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001) 57-76.

3. For a well-balanced presentation, see Raymond E. Brown, "Appendix I: *The Gospel of Peter* – A Noncanonical Passion Narrative," in idem, *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. 2, 1317-49. I will outline and criticise below some aspects of John Dominic Crossan's reconstruction of the so-called "*Cross Gospel*," a hypothetical ancestor of the canonical passion stories surviving only in the actual *Gospel of Peter*.

4. An opinion held by, e.g., Etta Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); or Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

5. See the useful surveys of Marion L. Soards, "Appendix IX: The Question of a Premarcan Passion Narrative," in Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. 2, 1492-524; and Edwin K. Broadhead, "In Search of the Gospel: Research Trends in Mark 14-16," *Australian Biblical Review* 43 (1995) 20-49.

In spite of the apparent silence of Paul's epistles and Q, which represent our oldest Christian documents,[6] some years ago Helmut Koester detected the traces of an ancient and independent passion tradition underlying the *Gospel of Peter*.[7] More recently, he has inferred that the traditional formulas quoted by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (15:3-7) presuppose not only the existence of an institutionalized ritual, but also of more developed narrative and exegetical contexts. This means that some full narratives of Jesus' passion and death were already circulating in the Christian communities at the beginning of the 50s of the first century C.E. Therefore, Koester contemplates the possibility of a long process of "oral performances" inserted in the frame of the Christian ritual. Those recitals would later give rise to the actual versions of the gospels of Mark and *Peter*.[8]

Following in Koester's wake, John Dominic Crossan has recently contributed to the discussion concerning the origins of the passion narratives providing an answer that is, in his opinion, definitive. In 1998 he published an impressive monograph on *The Birth of Christianity*, with the eloquent subtitle of *Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus*.[9] In this book, the outcome of more than twenty years of research, Crossan tries to demonstrate that the collection of the passion/resurrection narratives in the canonical gospels originally came from what he calls the "*Cross Gospel*," the primitive form of which would have been preserved by the *Gos-*

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6. In this connection, it matters little that Q is a hypothetical and reconstructed text. Note that its first critical edition has just been published by James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q: A Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Hermeneia Supplements; Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

7. See Helmut Koester, "Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980) 105-30; cf. also idem, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2: *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Foundation and Facets; Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1982), 162-3.

8. See Helmut Koester, "Jesus' Presence in the Early Church," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 15 (1994) 541-57 (553); idem, "The Historical Jesus and the Cult of the *Kyrios Christos*," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 24 (1995) 13-8; idem, "The Memory of Jesus' Death and the Worship of the Risen Lord," *Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998) 335-50 (347-8); cf. also idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 216-40.

9. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998. Cf. the review of François Bovon, in *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (2001) 369-74.

pel of Peter. The members of the community of Jerusalem would have written this *Cross Gospel* in the 40s of the first century C.E., in a context of crisis provoked by the anti-Christian actions undertaken by king Agrippa the First (41-44 C.E.). They would have reinterpreted the oral traditions of the previous decade according to the biblical story pattern of the persecution/vindication,[10] thus producing a new narrative of rehabilitation – one more collective than individual.[11]

The first difficulty in Crossan's treatment of the *Gospel of Peter* lies in his interpretation of the episode of the cross that follows the resurrected Christ out of the tomb.[12] In this account,

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10. A narratological model originally detected by George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980) 153-84.

11. See Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 481-525 ("The Other Passion-Resurrection Story"). Among Crossan's previous studies, especially noteworthy is his exhaustive monograph, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); it was anticipated by idem, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1992 [first edition, 1985]), 123-81; and popularised by idem, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 375-6, 381-94; and idem, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), passim; as well as by John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 227-8.

12. Note that different aspects of Koester's and/or Crossan's reconstructions have been previously criticised by Raymond E. Brown, "The *Gospel of Peter* and Canonical Gospel Priority," *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987) 321-43; Joel B. Green, "The Gospel of Peter: Source for a Pre-canonical Passion Narrative?," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 78 (1987) 293-301; Frans Neirynck, "The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark," in Jean-Marie Sevrin, ed., *The New Testament in Early Christianity – La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 86; Leuven: University Press, 1989), 123-75 (reprinted in idem, *Evangelica II: 1982-1991. Collected Essays* [ed. Frans Van Segbroeck; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 99; Leuven: University Press, 1991], 715-72); Susan E. Schaeffer, "The Guard at the Tomb (*Gos. Pet.* 8:28-11:49 and Matt 27:62-66; 28:2-4, 11-16): A Case of Intertextuality," in Eugene H. Lovering, Jr., ed., *Society of Biblical Literature: 1991 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 499-507; Alan Kirk, "Examining Priorities: Another Look at the *Gospel of Peter*'s Relationship to the New Testament Gospels," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994), 572-95; Robert E. Van Voorst, "Extra-canonical Accounts of the Death of Jesus," in John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, eds., *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 148-61; idem, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Studying the Historical Jesus; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 205-9; and Martha K. Stillman, "The Gospel of

during the night of Sabbath the soldiers who were keeping guard at the sepulcher heard a loud voice from heaven and saw two young men entering (9:35-37).

> "And while they were relating what they had seen [to Petronius the centurion and the elders], they see again three men come out from the sepulcher, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them. And the head of the two was reaching unto heaven, but that of him who was led of them by the hand was taller than the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens saying, 'Have you preached to those that sleep?' (ἐκήρυξας τοῖς κοιμωμένοις;) And from the cross there was heard an answer, 'Yes'" (10:39-42).[13]

The closest parallels to some details of this at first sight peculiar resurrection story are provided by Gospel of Matthew 27:62-66 (the guards at the tomb); 28:2-4 (the intervention of the angel of the Lord), 11-15 (the bribery of the guards); *Ascension of Isaiah* 3:14b-17 (the guards at the tomb; the descent of the angel of the church; the intervention of the angel of the Holy Spirit and Michel; the Beloved who emerges from the tomb sitting on their shoulders),[14] and possibly a late gloss to Mark 16:4

Peter: A Case for Oral-Only Dependency," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 73 (1997) 114-20.

13. For an excellent commentary of this passage, see Maria Grazia Mara, *Évangile de Pierre* (Sources chrétiennes 201; Paris: Cerf, 1973), 172-90; as well as the certainly old and biased but still useful work of Léon Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre* (Études bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1930), 287-303.

14. We can now read the Greek fragmentary text as well as the full Ethiopic version of this passage in the admirable edition of all the extant witnesses published by Paolo Bettiolo, Alda Giambelluca Kossova, Claudio Leonardi, Enrico Norelli, and Lorenzo Perrone, *Ascensio Isaiae: Textus* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 7; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 60-1 (Ethiopic), 142-3 (Greek), 370-1 (Latin synopsis of both texts); see also Norelli's exhaustive *Commentarius* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 8; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 201-6. Waiting for the publication of an English version of this commentary in the Hermeneia series, the reader can refer to the studies of Robert G. Hall, "The *Ascension of Isaiah*: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990) 289-306; idem, "Astonishment in the Firmament: The Worship of Jesus and Soteriology in Ignatius and the *Ascension of Isaiah*," in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 63; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1999), 148-55; Jonathan Knight, *Disciples of the Beloved One: The Christology, Social Setting and Theological Context of the Ascension of Isaiah* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series 18; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic

in the Codex Bobbiensis (the presence of two [?] angels).[15] These shared elements could stem either from a midrashic rereading of Matthew's passion,[16] or more probably from a preexisting oral tradition independently used by Matthew, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the *Gospel of Peter*.[17]

According to Crossan, the *Gospel of Peter* "describes Jesus arising at the head of 'them that sleep,' leading out the holy ones who are released from Hades in his triumphant train. They form a great cruciform procession behind him – hence my *Cross Gospel* title – and respond to God's question about their deliverance with a choral *yes*."[18] However, nothing in the preserved text of the *Gospel of Peter* leads to the opinion that the speaking cross is such a triumphant procession announcing the collective rehabilitation of the persecuted community. Moreover, this in-

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Press, 1996); Richard Bauckham, "The *Ascension of Isaiah*: Genre, Unity and Date," in idem, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Novum Testamentum, Supplements 93; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1998), 363-90; Greg Carey, "The *Ascension of Isaiah*: An Example of Early Christian Narrative Polemic," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 17 (1998) 65-78; Darrell D. Hannah, "Isaiah's Vision in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the Early Church," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999) 80-101; idem, "The *Ascension of Isaiah* and Docetic Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999) 165-96; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Worship and Monotheism in the *Ascension of Isaiah*," in Newman, Davila, and Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, 70-89.

15. Even if in this case, according to Darryl W. Palmer, "The Origin, Form, and Purpose of Mark xvi.4 in Codex Bobbiensis," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1976) 113-22, an ascension from the cross and not from the tomb is implied.

16. As maintained by Joseph Verheyden, "L'Ascension d'Isaïe et l'Évangile de Matthieu: Examen de AI 3,13-18," in Sevrin, ed., *The New Testament in Early Christianity*, 247-74.

17. As cogently argued by Enrico Norelli, *L'Ascensione di Isaia: Studi su un apocrifo al crocevia dei cristianesimi* (Origini, nuova serie 1; Bologna: Dehoniane, 1994), 142-59. Jonathan Knight also, in his recent essay "The Portrait of Mary in the *Ascension of Isaiah*," in F. Stanley Jones, ed., *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* (Society of Biblical Literature, Symposium Series 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 91-105, accepts the plausibility of such a trajectory (98-100).

18. Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 504 (see also 488-9). Note that in his previous studies Crossan was less affirmative: "I do not know for sure whether it is wise to ask how exactly the author visualizes that cross. Possibly it is an exclusively verbal symbol. But, while I am more certain of the cross as symbol of the common Passion of Israel and Jesus, I think it might be just possible that the author visualizes them following Jesus in a great cruciform procession. Maybe" (*The Cross That Spoke*, 387); and "That, at least, is how I imagine the author's intention, not as depicting a walking, talking wooden cross" (*Who Killed Jesus?*, 197).

terpretation does not seem to take into due account the belief in the return of the glorious cross – manifestly a real and personified one – as "the sign of the Son of Man," which, according to Matthew 24:30, will appear in heaven at the moment of the parousia. Thus, this mysterious sign is explicitly identified with the cross in a prophecy ascribed to Elijah in a Christian addition to his apocryphal *Apocalypse* 3:3 ("when the Christ comes, [...] he will walk upon the heaven's vaults with the sign of the cross leading him"), as well as in a promise made by Jesus himself to the apostles, as stated in *Apocalypse of Peter* 1:6 ("I will come on the clouds of heaven with a great host in my glory, with my cross going in front of me") and repeated almost word for word in *Epistula Apostolorum* 16 ("I will come as the sun [...], with the wings of the clouds carrying me in [my] glory and the sign of [my] cross going on in front of me").[19]

This evidence clearly demonstrates that the motif of the animated cross made its first appearance at the beginning of the second century C.E., approximately at the same time and in the same milieus that witnessed the spread of the first traditions on the descent of Christ to the underworld.[20] It would be rather surprising then to detect the simultaneous presence of both the personified cross and the descent to Hades motives in a text supposedly written many decades before the canonical gospels – that completely ignore these motives[21] – and other apocryphal texts such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* or the *Apocalypse of Peter*

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19. Crossan discusses some of these citations, as well as other traditions, in his *The Cross That Spoke*, 382-6. For a more comprehensive survey, see Jean-Marc Prieur, "La croix vivante dans la littérature chrétienne du II^e^ siècle," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 79 (1999) 435-44 (439-41). The same tradition is still at work in a text as late as Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse* (14). I wonder if the possible "scriptural" origin of such a belief is not an unknown prophetic passage quoted for the first time in *Epistle of Barnabas* 12:1 ("And when will all these things be accomplished? Says the Lord. When the tree will fall and rise, and when blood will flow from the tree") and attributed later to Isaiah.

20. In this case, the evidence is more impressive, including 1 Peter 3:18-4:6; Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:2; *Ascension of Isaiah* 4:21; 10:7-10; 11:19; *Odes of Salomon* 42:11-22; *Acts of Thomas* 10:4; 156:2; the agraphon quoted by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI.6.45.1; *Questions of Bartholomew* 1:6-7; *Epistula Apostolorum* 27. This large corpus has been recently reviewed by Rémi Gounelle, *La descente du Christ aux enfers: Institutionnalisation d'une croyance* (Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 162; Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 35-59, who tentatively suggests a Syrian origin for the first descent traditions.

21. Even if, according to Crossan's earlier reconstruction (see his *The Cross That Spoke*, 17), each of them should have used the *Cross Gospel* as an additional source besides Mark 14-16 for the passion episodes.

– that pick up just one of them. Admittedly, this combination of different elements is true only for the middle or even late second century C.E. *Epistula Apostolorum*.[22]

Another and even more serious difficulty is represented by the conditions of uncertainty that surround the textual transmission of the *Gospel of Peter*. Its major surviving fragment is, more exactly, a long excerpt copied at the beginning of a composite codex of the eighth/ninth or even the fifth/sixth century (PCair 10759), which was discovered in the grave of a monk at Akhmim (the ancient Panopolis), in 1886-87. This manuscript contains the long passion fragment taken from the *Gospel of Peter* (pp. 2-10), followed by the transfiguration episode and the description of the places of the righteous and the sinners from the *Apocalypse of Peter* (pp. 13-20) copied in a cursive writing. In the next pages and written in uncial script, there are the Greek version of *1 Enoch* 1-32, corresponding to nearly the whole of the *Book of the Watchers* (pp. 21-66), and finally, a short excerpt of the *Martyrdom of Saint Julian of Anazarbe* (pp. 67-8).

Especially noteworthy are not only the eschatological overtone of the anthology, but also the reworked nature of at least one of the texts for which a comparison with other more complete and reliable witnesses is still possible, i.e., the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The eschatological recasting of the Akhmim fragment is particularly evident when compared with the Ethiopic text, which has the punishments and rewards sequences in the reversed order and, more significantly, introduced as *anticipatory visions* of the fate of the sinners and the righteous after the final Judgment.[23] Accordingly, we cannot exclude the possibility that the actual excerpt of the *Gospel of Peter* has also been heavily

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22. For Koester too, the episode of the speaking cross is but one of the "numerous features [in the *Gospel of Peter*] which are obviously secondary" (*Ancient Christian Gospels*, 217-8; cf. also 233, n. 2).

23. The Ethiopic version has been reedited by Dennis D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series 97; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); and Paolo Marrassini, "L'Apocalisse di Pietro," in Yaqob Beyene, Rodolfo Fattovich, Paolo Marrassini, and Alessandro Triulzi, eds., *Etiopia e oltre: Studi in onore di Lanfranco Ricci* (Studi africanistici, Serie etiopica 1; Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1994), 171-232; see also Richard Bauckham's seminal study, "The *Apocalypse of Peter*: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," *Apocrypha* 5 (1994) 7-111 (reprinted in idem, *The Fate of the Dead*, 160-258). Note that these specialists all agree on the priority of the textual tradition preserved by the Ethiopic version and its allies against what they consider to be a secondary rewriting copied in the Akhmim fragment.

edited and reworked in the perspective of its inclusion in a collection either for personal devotion or for funerary use.[24] In other words, the distance between the Akhmim fragment and the lost original text of the *Gospel of Peter* could be greater than what is usually thought[25] – an assumption that seems to be confirmed by the presence of significant variant readings in two or three small papyrus fragments possibly belonging to a previous second-century edition (?) of the same text.[26]

Concerning the approximate date of the *Gospel of Peter* – or of its original kernel, I wonder if we can confidently argue for the first century C.E. only on the grounds that some of the Old Testament passages used there for the description of Jesus' pas-

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24. Concerning the possible editorial differences between the Greek Akhmim text and the Qumran Aramaic fragments, the Greek Syncellus' quotations and the Ethiopic version of *1 Enoch*, see my previous studies, "Sulla *Vorlage* aramaica dell'Enoch etiopico," *Studi Classici e Orientali* 37 (1987) 545-94 (555-7, 587-92); and "Il testo e le traduzioni dell'Enoch etiopico, 1976-1987," *Henoch* 10 (1988) 85-95 (92). The reader will find a good discussion of these variant readings in the first volume of the exhaustive commentary recently published by George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 135-328. In comparison with the previous texts, the fragment of the *Martyrdom of Saint Julian of Anazarbe* has received little attention; see François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, vol. 2 (Subsidia Hagiographica 8a; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957), 73-4 (nn. 965-7e). According to the anonymous Bollandist who republished it together with the corresponding excerpt taken from the eleventh century Greek manuscript n. 1488 of the Bibliothèque nationale ("Un fragment des Actes de S. Julien d'Anazarbe," *Analecta Bollandiana* 15 [1896] 73-6), the Akhmim fragment seems to preserve a text more original and, at the same time, more abridged than the Parisian one (76).

25. Koester too expresses similar reservations, and aptly remembers that the early textual transmission of the canonical and apocryphal gospels was "very unstable" (*Ancient Christian Gospels*, 219).

26. Edited by Revel A. Coles, "2949. Fragments of an Apocryphal Gospel (?)," in Gerald M. Browne et alii, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 41 (Graeco-Roman Memoirs 57; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1972), 15-6, pl. II; and by Dieter Lührmann and Peter J. Parsons, "4009. Gospel of Peter?," in Revel A. Coles et alii, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 60 (Graeco-Roman Memoirs 80; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1994), 1-5, pl. I. The first two fragments were reexamined by Dieter Lührmann, "POx 2949: EvPt 3-5 in einer Handschrift des 2./3. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 72 (1981) 216-26; and Jay C. Treat, "The Two Manuscript Witnesses to the Gospel of Peter," in David J. Lull, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature: 1990 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 391-9; the third one by Dieter Lührmann, "POx 4009: Ein neues Fragment des Petrus-evangeliums?," *Novum Testamentum* 35 (1993) 390-410.

sion are different from the corresponding materials employed in the canonical writings.[27] This argument seems to underestimate the creative role played by the collections of *testimonia*, or scriptural prophetic passages foreshadowing the events of Jesus' ministry, all through the second century C.E. and even later.[28] Of course, the christological exegesis of the Jewish Scriptures played a foundational role in the shaping of the very first traditions that would eventually produce the oral and then written passion narratives.[29] However, it would be naïve to assume that the more an early Christian discourse on Jesus' sufferings is endowed with intertextual references to the Prophets and the Psalms, the more ancient these documents/traditions are. As indisputably later texts show, things probably evolved the other way. At the same time, oral traditions must have continued to influence the creation of new written narratives and to be in turn influenced by them at an epoch of great creative freedom in the absence of any organized attempt to impose an authoritative canon. Therefore, the greatest value of the *Gospel of Peter* – one

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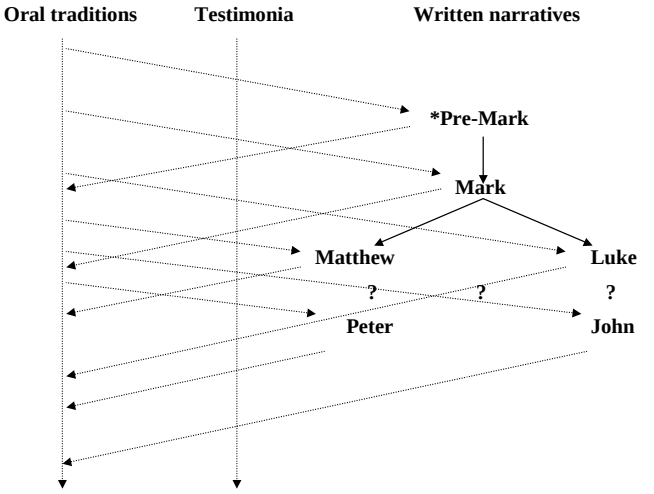
27. An observation originally made by Jürgen Denker, *Die theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Petrusevangeliums: Ein Beitrag zur Frügeschichte des Doketismus* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 36; Bern/Frankfurt: Lang, 1975), 58-77.

28. As demonstrated by the studies of Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-text Tradition: Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Novum Testamentum, Supplements 56; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1987); idem, "From Books to Testimonies: Remarks on the Transmission of the Old Testament in the Early Church," *Immanuel* 24 (1990) 207-19; Enrico Norelli, "Il dibattito con il Giudaismo nel II Secolo: *Testimonia*; Barnaba; Giustino," in idem, ed., *La Bibbia nell'antichità cristiana*, vol. 1: *Da Gesù a Origene* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1993), 199-233; idem, "*Testimonia* apocryphes dans le christianisme ancien: Projet d'un recueil et problèmes de méthode," *Apocrypha* 6 (1996) 12-8; Martin C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken:" The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (Novum Testamentum, Supplements 96; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1999); or Mark D. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999) 289-304. Consider that the process of developing narratives from scriptural prophecies is still at work in the *Book of the Cock*, an unpublished apocryphal passion gospel (see below, n. 45) probably written in the fifth or sixth century C.E.!

29. The most important scriptural intertexture that supports the passion/resurrection narratives is mainly made up of Psalms 22; 31; 69; 89, Isaiah 52-53, Zechariah 9-14, Daniel 7. On the use of these early *testimonia*, see the excellent syntheses of Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 89-133, 151-70; and Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 153-98.

of the many gospels written in the first quarter or even the middle of the second century C.E. – does not lie in the preservation of portions of an older and primitive document otherwise lost, but in its existence in itself, as a precious testimony of a definitively bygone epoch anterior to the establishment of a more or less rigid canon of the New Testament writings. Some of the exegetical and narrative traditions it conveys are quite ancient,[30] some of them were even imperfectly used by its predecessors,[31] and some others are more recent.[32]

Be that as it may, setting aside a too simplistic "two documents" (i.e., Mark 14-16 and the *Cross Gospel*) theory, we can more aptly summarize the development of the passion narratives in the following diagram based on the assumption that existed only one pre-Markan written narrative (actually embodied in Mark 14-16), a limited number of short collections of *testimonia*, and a multiplicity of oral traditions (which have left their imprints in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7; *Ascension of Isaiah* 3:13-18, and elsewhere, both in the canonical and the apocryphal texts).



30. In Crossan's opinion (see his *Four Other Gospels*, 133-5; *The Cross That Spoke*, 409-13; *Who Killed Jesus?*, 223-7), the core of the original *Cross Gospel* would actually survive in *Gospel of Peter* 1:1-2; 2:5b-6:22; 7:25; 8:28-10:42; 11:45-49. While according to Koester (see his *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 220-40), the best candidates to the label of ancient traditions/narratives are the scenes in 1:1; 3:6-9; 5:16; 8:29-10:38a; 10:39b-40; 11:45; 12:50-13:57.

31. See above, n. 17.

32. See above, n. 22.

II. Searching for Laments and Commemorations

Crossan must be praised for bringing a new and original perspective into the theory of the elaboration of the original passion/resurrection narrative by the capital role that he now assigns to the ritual lament of early Christian women.[33] The historicity of these feminine funerary lamentations, as well as their contribution to the creation of the passion story, have recently been suggested by Marianne Sawicki and Kathleen E. Corley.

> I suggest that such grief over the loss of the body [of Jesus] was the starting point of the reflection that culminates in a 'finding' of the empty tomb and a 'seeing' of Jesus as already risen from the dead," Sawicki declared.[34] "I am suggesting that the passion narrative had its origins in a grass-roots liturgical context dominated by women and ordinary people," Corley added.[35]

Crossan elaborates upon these perspectives using the funerary laments of Eileen O'Connell for her husband (Ireland, eighteenth century), Chrysa Kalliakati for her mother, and Kalliopi for her fiancé (Greece, twentieth century) as a new set of intercultural parallels that can contribute to cast a different light on the prehistory of the passion narrative.[36] These European women have painfully sung the posthumous "biographies" of their beloved ones. In doing so, they have powerfully made resonant

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33. See Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 527-73 ("Exegesis, Lament, and Biography").

34. Marianne Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and Early Christian Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 257.

35. Kathleen E. Corley, *Gender and Jesus: History and Lament in Gospel Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press) – but note that this quotation comes from Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 528, because Corley's monograph, announced by Crossan as "forthcoming," has not yet been published; cf. also eadem, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993).

36. Crossan also mentions the potential lament that the mother of the seven young Jewish boys martyred by Antiochus the Fourth could have performed at least in theory in the context of *4 Maccabees* 16:6-11 (*The Birth of Christianity*, 529-30). However, it would have been more appropriate to refer to the vision of the woman in deep mourning for the death of her only son – in fact, the figure of Zion overwhelmed by the downfall of Jerusalem – in *4 Ezra* 9:38-10:59. For a sociological approach of this episode, see Dilys N. Patterson, "'The Earth Shook at Her Voice:' Mother Zion as an Agent of Transformation in *4 Ezra*," a paper presented to the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, in Edmonton (Alberta), May 2000.

their cry of despair and revolt against the society and the institutions deemed responsible for those disappearances.[37]

Such comparisons between Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean societies, ancient and modern, but in any case pre-industrial, are absolutely relevant and appropriate to illustrate the anthropological otherness of the Mediterranean culture as opposed to the contemporary Western culture in which we are all living.[38] Nevertheless, I believe that it is rather arbitrary to adopt these grounds in order to definitively separate, as Crossan does, the two "original" elements of the passion story, namely, the narrative and the exegetical ones. The first one would come from a funerary lament for Jesus' death performed by the women belonging to the Jerusalem community, while the second would be the outcome of the interpretation of the prophecies supposed to foretell the sufferings inflicted on the Messiah.[39]

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37. See the anthropological studies of Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Loring M. Danforth, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 71-115; Anna Caraveli-Chaves, "The Bitter Wounding: The Lament as Social Protest in Rural Greece," in Jill Dubisch, ed., *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 169-94; eadem, "Bridge Between Worlds: The Greek Women's Lament as Communicative Event," *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980) 129-57; and Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992).

38. See, e.g., the methodological reflections of Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14-21, 27-41, about the categories of "honor and shame" or the opposition between the sphere of the public activities, traditionally reserved to the men, and the sphere of the private life, where the women are relegated. Sawicki (*Seeing the Lord*, 243-50) has insightfully warned against a too mechanical and simplistic importation of the contemporary Mediterranean values into the ancient societies – a few marvelous pages, full of knowledge and wisdom, which every student interested in anthropological analyses of early Christian realities should carefully read and think upon. However, the existence of such an anthropological specificity in the long-term (the "I also have a moustache" common denominator) has recently been confirmed by the authoritative inquiry of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford/Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 485-523.

39. See the conclusion of Crossan's chapter on "Exegesis, Lament, and Biography:" "I imagine in that Jerusalem community two equiprimordial processes, *exegesis* and *lament*, engendered respectively by male and female members. In the absence of a body and a tomb, female ritual lament wove exegetical fragments into a sequential story. [...] What I imagine [...] is that in the Jerusalem community the female lament tradition turned the male exegetical tradition into a passion-resurrection story once and for all forever. The closest we can get to that story now is the *Cross Gospel*, whose insis-

The men would be considered responsible for such an intellectual contribution, as if they had the exclusive right to study the Scriptures![40] This calls to mind *Head and Shoulders*, a charming short story written as only Francis Scott Fitzgerald could write.

In the following, I would like to tackle the question of the origins of the passion narratives from a relatively new point of view. I will carry out a study of the internal texture of a sample of some passages taken from our best witness, Mark 14-16, in order to verify the hypothesis of the potential existence of a primitive, preexisting narrative. I will attempt to ascertain if such a pre-Markan story bears the traces of a writing that we could qualify, with Hélène Cixous, as "feminine." This kind of writing does not (only) mean a special attention paid to some feminine details or characters scattered through the narrative,[41] but, ac-

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tence on communal passion and communal resurrection may be the strongest index of those origins" (*The Birth of Christianity*, 573).

40. Contrary to a too simplistic understanding of the Mediterranean societies in general and of pre-rabbinic Judaism in particular, we have some evidence that sometimes Second Temple Jewish upper class women devoted themselves to the study of the Torah. This is clearly the case of the Hasmonean queen Alexandra Salome/Shelamzion (76-67 B.C.E.), as brilliantly argued by Dilys N. Patterson, *"Honoured in Her Time:" Queen Shelamzion and the Book of Judith* (Ph.D. thesis; Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2002), 186-9. This is also presumably true for the "Therapeutrides," the female members of the Jewish ascetic community described by Philo, whose evidence has been reexamined by Ross S. Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Egypt: Philo on the Therapeutrides," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 (1989) 342-70; eadem, "Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period," in Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *"Women like This:" New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and Its Literature 1; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1991), 221-42 (222-3, 229-30); eadem, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 113-7, 230-1. And even at the beginning of the rabbinic era, according to Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1993), 167-96, "while in Babylonia (at any rate, late in the rabbinic period) it was unthinkable and perhaps terrifying that a woman might study Torah, in Palestine it was merely uncustomary and noteworthy" (195).

41. In this connection, especially instructive is the discussion between Mary K. Lefkowitz, "Did Ancient Women Write Novels?," in Levine, ed., *"Women like This,"* 199-219, who finds no special emphasis on "those aspects of women's life apart from men occasionally described by ancient women writers: love for other women, particularly childhood contemporaries, the joys of childhood, and love for a daughter" (212-3) either in *Joseph and Aseneth*, the *Testament of Job*, or the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, and Kraemer, "Wo-

cording to Cixous, it is rather a political and textual strategy that dares to "take the risk of *other*, of difference, without feeling threatened by the existence of an otherness."[42] It is primarily an attitude against the adoption of the gender differences promoted by mainstream and normative, "phallocentric" society and literature. It is not biologically grounded, and even a male author can be capable of producing such an "*écriture féminine*," provided that he accepts his own femininity.[43] And as specialists of early Christianity we should think – especially before addressing the question of any pre-canonical tradition – on the recurrent phenomenon of the reemergence of such a femininity at the beginnings of new (religious) movements. In Cixousian highly imaged terms,

> "There always has been femininity from time immemorial but it has been repressed. It has never been unnamed, only suppressed. Of course, one finds more femininity in texts that are written 'close to the savage heart,' in texts that are still close to sources, springs, to myth and *to beginnings of* literary *movements before they become institutionalized*. Literature is like history. It is organized so as to repress and hide its own origin which always deals with some kind of femininity."[44]

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men's Authorship," 231-6, who considers, on the contrary, that *Joseph and Aseneth* actually "is replete with such details" (235). Incidentally, one should note that Kramer's position on this particular pseudepigraphon has evolved since then, and that in her recent monograph, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), she leaves the question of the identity of its author perfectly open. Be that as it may, in the case of anonymous or pseudonymous works, ancient as well as modern, to argue for gendered authorship is always an uncertain step, for the excellent reason that such narratives only project images of the implicit, not of the real, historical author.

42. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (trans. Betsy Wing; Theory and History of Literature 24; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [French original edition, 1975]), 78. I am especially grateful to Marc A. Hewson (Ottawa) for introducing me to Cixousian feminist thought.

43. See Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 84-6, reasserting the value of what they call "the *other* bisexuality," "that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex" (85).

44. Hélène Cixous, *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva* (trans. and ed. Verena Andermatt Conley; Theory and History of Literature 77; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 3 (emphasis added).

In my opinion, it is possible to bring out the aporias of the actual Markan text thanks to the comparison, if the need arises, with the parallel episodes of the rather unknown *Book of the Cock*, an apocryphal passion story so called because of the miraculous resurrection of a cooked rooster during the Passover meal shared by Jesus and his disciples in the house of Simon the Pharisee, in Bethany. This late apocryphal text was probably composed in Greek, in the years 451-79 CE, within the anti-Chalcedonian community which was centered around the two monasteries founded on the Mount of Olives by Melania the Younger and her husband Pinianus.[45] Such a comparative approach should allow us to have a better understanding of the evolution of the ideological, social, and cultural textures[46] which has occurred in the retelling of certainly the same story, but more than four centuries later.

The most appropriate starting point is indisputably the small alabaster jar containing the perfume made of nard used to anoint Jesus at Bethany in Mark 14:3, the first of the "four broken cornerstones" buried in Markan narrative and unearthed thanks to the scholarly feminist archeology work of Marianne Sawicki.[47] The episode of the anointing in Bethany in Mark

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45. The *Book of the Cock* is based upon the four canonical Gospels as well as some apocryphal and legendary traditions. I have translated the Ethiopic version into French for vol. 2 of Geoltrain and Kaestli, eds., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, in press; and I have carried out its first systematic study in my "Exploring the Ethiopic *Book of the Cock*, An Apocryphal Passion Gospel from Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003) in press. Meanwhile, the reader can refer to the short presentations provided by Roger W. Cowley, "The So-Called 'Ethiopic *Book of the Cock*' – Part of an Apocryphal Passion Gospel, *The Homily and Teaching of Our Fathers the Holy Apostles*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1985) 16-22; Philippe Luisier, "De Pilate chez les Coptes," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 62 (1996) 411-25 (422-5); Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Marius Chaîne, Joseph Trinquet et la version éthiopienne du *Livre du coq*," *Transversalités: Revue de l'Institut catholique de Paris* 85 (2003) 51-62; and Rémi Gounelle, "À propos des volailles cuites qui ont chanté lors de la passion du Christ," *Recherches augustiniennes* 33 (2003) 19-63 (29-33, 55-61).

46. Following the socio-rhetorical model of textual communication developed by Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996); idem, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996).

47. Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord*, 150 (the other three being, "[2] the loaf broken at Mark 14: 22; [3] the body violated at Mark 15:15-25; and [4] the tombstone dislodged at Mark 16:4").

14:3-9 is in many respects tight-lipped and enigmatic,[48] as demonstrated by the comparison with the Gospel parallels (Matthew 26:6-13, Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-8), and especially the late and much more developed narrative of the *Book of the Cock* (3:1-8).

Mark 14	***Book of the Cock* 3**
[3] And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.	[1] Among the inhabitants of that city there was a woman who was a sinner. She heard that the Lord Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper. So she rose, went to a perfume merchant, and said to him, "I would like that you give me a luxurious perfume, very expensive and with a delicate scent. [2] I am going to buy it from you to anoint my Lord Christ pouring it over his head, in order that he should have compassion on me and forgive my sins." He gave her a luxurious and expensive perfume that she bought for three hundred denarii. And she hastened to go to the house of Simon with delight. [3] She found the Lord Jesus sitting down. She poured the perfume over his head, wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair; and the entire house was filled with the fragrance of its scent.

48. On the different facets of this episode, see James F. Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany and the Priority of John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 241-56; Burton L. Mack, "The Anointing of Jesus: Elaboration within a Chreia," in Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1989), 85-106; John Paul Heil, "Mark 14,1-52: Narrative Structure and Reader-Response," *Biblica* 71 (1990): 305-32; Vernon K. Robbins, "Using a Socio-Rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: The Woman Who Anointed Jesus as a Test Case," in Eugene H. Lovering, Jr., ed., *Society of Biblical Literature: 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 302-19; Yves Simoens, "L'onction eucharistique et la Cène nuptiale selon Marc 14,1-31," in Pietro Bovati and Roland Meynet, eds., *Ouvrir les Écritures: Mélanges offerts à Paul Beauchamp à l'occasion de ses soixante-dix ans* (Lectio Divina 162; Paris: Cerf, 1995), 245-66; Guy Wagner, "L'onction de Béthanie: essai sur la genèse du récit de Mc 14/3-9 et sa reprise par Matthieu, Luc et Jean," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 72 (1997): 437-46.

[4] But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? [5] For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor." And they reproached her.

[6] But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. [7] For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me. [8] She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying.
[9] And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel will be preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

(*Revised Standard Version*)

[4] This dismayed Judas Iscariot, who exclaimed, "Why has she wasted such an amount of perfume, instead of selling it for three hundred denarii, and giving alms to the poor?" [5] This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was in charge of the money box, for he was a thief and he used to give to his wife what the Lord had entrusted him for the money box, although he was aware that Judas would find some pretext.
[6] The Lord Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? It is a good deed that she has done for me. For the poor, you will be able to find them, and have with you, but you will not always have me. [7] As for this perfume that she poured on me, she has done it this way for my burial.
And truly, I say to you, wherever the holy gospel will be preached in the whole world, this woman and what she has done will be remembered too."
[8] And the Lord Jesus turned towards her and said, "Your countless sins are forgiven, for you have loved me much. Go home in peace, and do not sin again."
That woman went away, and it was John the evangelist who witnessed these words.

In the Gospel of Mark, the description of the place, the scene, the characters, and their gestures is reduced to its essential points: the reader knows that the scene is set "at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper," that "he [i.e., Jesus] sat at table," that an anonymous woman "came with an alabaster flask," that "she broke" it and "poured" the perfume over Jesus' head, remaining then silent (14:3). The reader ignores all about her identity (for example, is she one of the famous Marys, the disciples of the Lord?), her social-religious status (is she a prostitute and/or a sinner?), as well as the motives that have pressed her to act in that way (is she looking for forgiveness?). One can only guess from the deeply shocked reaction of some of the people who are present (14:4-5) that her gesture has cast a chill over the company, and that the consequence of this could put Jesus in an awkward position. The information provided by the narra-

tor is as concise as possible[49] and looks like the stage directions that introduce the cues of a theatrical play. As it is exactly the case in dramatic works, a new character comes on stage and gives a silent performance, which will give rise to discussion and comments.

This is clearly not the case of the account of the same episode in the *Book of the Cock*, where the woman is henceforth identified not with Mary from Bethany, Martha and Lazarus' sister, who anoints Jesus in John 12:1-8, but with the anonymous sinner who anoints him in Luke 7:37-50.[50] Additionally, at the end of this episode, after the borrowing of the "forgiveness" and "departure" formulas from Luke 7:47-48, 50 ("Your countless sins [...]. Go home in peace"), the narrator lets Jesus add this final recommendation, "and do not sin again," taken from John 8:11, making an explicit reference to the witness of the beloved disciple ("and it was John the evangelist who witnessed these words"). Such an intertextual collage should suggest to the reader that the anonymous sinner from Bethany and the adulteress of John 8:1-11 are the same person.

The narrator also describes Judas' shocked reaction, putting it in terms like those found in John 12:4-6 ("this he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was in charge of the money box, for he was a thief"). Then he adds an original comment about the complicity existing between Judas and his wife in an instance of the misappropriation of funds.[51] But the reader has no reason to worry as Jesus is very well informed about the situation which, as it is usual in the *Book of the Cock*, is perfectly under his control.[52]

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49. "Il est clair que le texte n'est narratif qu'en apparence. Il est en réalité symbolique de bout en bout," as Wagner, "L'onction de Béthanie," 439, puts it (in Wagner's opinion, the woman represents the community of faithful).

50. The merger of the two episodes is also confirmed by the melding of the character of Simon "the leper" (who receives such an appellative in *Book of the Cock* 3:1; see also 2:6) from Mark and Matthew with the character of Simon "the Pharisee" (he is identified as such in *Book of the Cock* 2:13; 4:1) from Luke. Moreover, the description of the woman's gesture is a skilful harmony made of different elements taken from the canonical anointing narratives. In the *Book of the Cock* 3:3, she first pours the ointment over Jesus' head (cf. Mark 14:3, Matthew 26:7), and wets his feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair (cf. Luke 7:38, John 12:3) while the house is filled with the fragrance of the ointment (cf. John 12:3).

51. This new piece of information will be further definitively confirmed in the story, in *Book of the Cock* 4:9-11, 19.

52. One should note that some Ethiopic manuscripts present a variant and possibly more original reading, "It was the Lord who had entrusted him

Looking at Mark, it is in Jesus' reply (14:6-9) that the woman's gesture receives not only an explanation that fully justifies it, but also a legitimization that transcends the apparently narrow limits of the episode. Concerning the justification of her act, "she has done a beautiful thing" because "she has anointed [Jesus'] body beforehand for burying." Accordingly, in the Markan Jesus' eyes, she is not seen as a passing madwoman or a repenting prostitute, but as a true prophetess, the only clear-sighted person invited to a meeting of blind people.[53] Hence the astonishing praise that concludes Jesus' speech and that, by a rather unconventional mise en abyme, opens an unexpected window on the reader's world.[54] Therefore, is "in memory of her" (εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς) an oblique signature pointing to a female author of this narrative,[55] or a clue that the male narrator of the first part of the gospel has handed over the passion story to a female colleague? Is it a simple narrative or, more likely, the memory of a *poiesis*, a kind of liturgical (if we follow Étienne Trocmé's reconstruction[56]) or theatrical performance (if we prefer that of Marianne Sawicki[57])?

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with the money box, so that he [i.e., Judas] should neither grumble [literally, 'he should not say in his heart'] nor find some pretext."

53. This is made even clearer – at least, in the reader's eyes – thanks to the insertion of the anointing narrative into the frame of the conspiracy of the high priests against Jesus (14:1-2) with the complicity of Judas Iscariot (14:10-11). On this literary device, see James R. Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives," *Novum Testamentum* 31 (1989), 193-216 (208-9).

54. "This commentary unveils the symbolic gesture of the woman who has just anointed his head: it makes this a place where the force of the passion towards which Jesus is going is concentrated. That is why this gesture will accompany the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world. It follows from this that readers, becoming aware of Mark's narrative, can immediately verify that Jesus' saying is well-founded: it is realized the moment they read it!," as Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1999 [French original edition, 1998]), 108, insightfully put it.

55. "One could surely, by the way, make a better case for Mark-as-a-woman obliquely signing her manuscript by that sentence at 14:9 than one ever did for Mark-as-a-man obliquely signing his by that flapping nightshirt in the garden at 14:51-52" (Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 416).

56. See especially Étienne Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark* (trans. Pamela Gaughan; London: S.P.C.K.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975 [French original edition, 1963]); idem, *The Passion as Liturgy: A Study in the Origin of the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1983).

57. See Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord*, 151-4. Sawicki "would [...] interpret the 'her' as a *subjective* genitive, so that the anointing is the woman's poiesis:

> "This suggests a *symposion* where Jesus' death is the focus of the artistic performance and the conversation. A women's histrionic work has proposed to the symposiasts that Jesus died obediently, faithfully, divinely, and freely. The script with this reading of Jesus' death is no longer available to us. We do not know whether it was a pantomime (as the story suggests), a drama, an epigram or lyric, an epitaph, or another of the performance genres culturally attested for banquets in the Greco-Roman period. But we are given to understand that this interpretation of Jesus' stance toward his own death caused consternation amid the assembled company. There are divergent explanations of why. Luke mentions horror at the touch of a sinful woman; the other Gospels cite neglect of charitable obligations. This divergence indicates that the canonical accounts all branched off from an earlier story of an anointing. That earlier story, I suggest, was itself the precipitate of a prior practise of women's talking and teaching about Jesus in the years immediately following his death."[58]

Sawicki concludes that it is a practice that could have developed out of the funerary laments performed by the Jewish women belonging to the hellenized elite of the city of Jerusalem. These same matrons would have been the first members of the Jesus movement to apply some key Septuagint passages to the anointed of Bethany in order to give a (theological) meaning to his tragic death. They would have mourned for him in their own apartments (the *gynaikon*) at first, before repeating the laments in the men's dining hall (the *andron*).[59]

Of course, it is quite difficult to assess the degree of historical plausibility that we can attribute to such a reconstruction. Nevertheless, Sawicki's hypothesis has the great merit of putting together into the same explanation both the grieving and the exegetical "original" aspects of the passion narrative.[60]

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what she has made out of Jesus, her memory of him" (151).

58. Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord*, 152.

59. See Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord*, 152, 164-7, 256-8. Note that, in Sawicki's opinion, "The passion narrative, from Bethany to Golgotha, is Mark's construction" (167, referring in footnote 23 to Mack, *A Myth of Innocence*, 323-4).

60. This assumption is clearly confirmed by the identification of the ritual contexts to which belong the Psalms of lamentation that form the scriptural intertexture of the passion narratives (see above, n. 29) either as collective mourning (e.g., Psalm 69) or communal rejoicing rites (e.g., Psalm 22). See the recent studies of Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 82-95; and Esther M. Menn, "No Ordinary Lament: Relecture and the Identity of the Distressed in Psalm 22," *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000) 301-41 (306, 310).

Moreover, such a primitive passion story could have left other imprints in the narrative texture of the Markan passion. Think of the deliberate strategy aiming to deconstruct those normative models that are the male disciples in general, and Peter in particular, the latter being publicly dishonored by one of the maids of the high priest – a woman![61] – and denying his Master (14:66-72) at the very place where, and at the exact time when Jesus was confessing his Messianic condition to the Jewish authorities (14:53-65).[62] Think of the clear intention of emphasizing those alternative models that are, in order of appearance, the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross (15:39, 44-45); the fearful Mary of Magdala, Mary, the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, who "followed" (ἀκολουθέω) Jesus and "ministered" (διακονέω)[63] to him from the beginnings of his ac-

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61. A Mediterranean peculiarity that did not catch Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 160-1, 274, 405.

62. The narrator of the *Book of the Cock* judiciously corrects the bad impression that such a denial could have produced on the reader. In the rest of the episode (5:32-35), he or she transforms the brief look cast by Jesus to Peter in Luke 22:61 into a full discussion on human weakness and the benefits of Christian forgiveness. The text runs as follow, "[32] When he saw him, the Lord Jesus told him, 'Peter, remember what you said a moment ago with your fellows. No one among you should dare to speak to me about my passion, for all those who know me will deny me. [33] I personally know that, when the Son intercedes with the Father, even if the Lord shows mercy and might, goodness moves away from human beings while evil grows in them. Therefore, I forgive you, you who denied me three times. For I am compassionate and merciful.' [34] Then Peter said to him, "My beloved Lord, you know the weakness of the creation of Adam [cf. Romans 5:12-14, *4 Ezra* 3:4-7; 4:30-31; 7:116-118, *2 Baruch* 54:15, 19; 56:5-8].' And the Lord Jesus replied, 'If one of your brothers, a Christian, commits a sin, forgive him seven times seven [cf. Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 17:3-4, *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* 15]. For there is no human being free from sin on earth. And nobody should say to himself, I am innocent and free from sin. [35] As for you, I entrust you with the keys of the kingdom of heaven [cf. Matthew 16:19]. Go to your brothers, and tell them about all that has happened to me. After they will have crucified me on the wood of the cross, weep and lament for three days. After that, I will resurrect from the dead.'"

63. On the technical use of this verb and its derivatives in Paul's epistles to designate a missionary collaboration established on an egalitarian level, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's observations in her groundbreaking monograph, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994 [first edition, 1983]), 168-75. Luke's editorial passage in 8:1-3 is the only witness which specifies that these women – Mary of Magdala, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Susanna, "and many others" – "had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities" (ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν), and were "pro-

tivities in Galilee (15:40-41, 47; 16:1-8);[64] or the brave Joseph of Arimathea, an influential member of the Sanhedrin (15:42-46).

It is certainly true that these three women, as well as "many others" who came up with Jesus to Jerusalem, "were looking from afar" (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι) on the crucified man that was dying terribly on the cross (15:40-41). But is it really necessary for us to infer from this that they "stopped before the end of the trip," and they "left him to complete all alone the journey [that they had] begun [together]"? Or that "less cowardly than their male counterparts, they were wary of what could compromise them and to put them in danger," and their role is "in fact nothing to be proud of"?[65] Perhaps, it would be wiser to advocate the presence here of an echo of Psalm 37:12 (38:11), "My friends and my neighbors get closer and stand against [literally, 'in front of'] me, and my closest kinsmen stand afar" (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν). Or even better, we could see in this withdrawal of the women one of the traces left by one of the main non-bibli-

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vid[ing] for him [i.e., Jesus, or 'for them,' i.e., Jesus and the Twelve] *out of their means*" (διηκόνουν αὐτῷ/αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς). Not so surprisingly, the "seven demons" of the Lukan Magdalene and the financial resources of the wife of Herod's steward have given rise to many ingenious but speculative studies as, e.g., Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others: Women Who Followed Jesus* (trans. Paul Burns; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994 [original Italian edition, 1991]); Marianne Sawicki, "Magdalenes and Tiberiennes: City Women in the Entourage of Jesus," in Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, ed., *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Reviewed* (Biblical Interpretation Series 43; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000), 181-202 (reprinted in eadem, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000], 133-53); or Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, "Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-scientific Perspective," in Kitzberger, ed., *Transformative Encounters*, 203-23. However, one should remember that these additions correspond more to Luke's late and re-patriarchalizing perspectives than to the original situation of the Jesus movement in Galilee. In other words, to paraphrase Sawicki, these rich city women were probably more common in the entourage of Luke than among Jesus' first Galilean followers.

64. In the *Book of the Cock* 9:11, at the foot of the cross, together with John, Mary, and other weeping anonymous followers, there are also "the women [their identity is not specified] who loved the Lord, and they [fem.] too were crying for Jesus because of the beaming beauty of his face" (adopting the reading of some Ethiopic manuscripts, whereas the printed edition has, "and they [fem.] could have been considered blessed because of their [fem.] beaming beauty").

65. As Simon Légasse bluntly puts it in his recent commentary, *L'Évangile de Marc*, vol. 2 (Lectio Divina, Commentaires 5; Paris: Cerf, 1997), 984-5 (cf. also Brown's milder but essentially similar judgement in his *The Death of the Messiah*, vol. 2, 1157-9).

cal hypertexts underlying the passion narrative, that is to say, the description of Hector's death in the *Iliad*, as cleverly argued by Dennis R. MacDonald[66] – although in book XXII, the fact that Trojan women were looking at the hero's fate from the city walls is actually not explicitly stated but rather implied. In any case, these intertextual references do not explain in themselves the fact that in the Markan passion the only trustworthy eyewitnesses to the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus always and exclusively are the women of Mary of Magdala's group.

It is also certainly true that Mark made the decision to conclude his or her work in a perfectly enigmatic manner dismissing, so to speak, the tradition of the women, afraid and unable to speak (16:8), and the tradition of the men, on the run and scattered nobody knows where, without pronouncing in favor of either. This lack of communication does not prevent the reader from imagining that the disciples, Peter first, will finally regain their self-control and will remember the promise made by Jesus to meet them again, after his resurrection, in Galilee (14:28; 16:7). However, the perspectives and purposes of Mark as an author are not necessarily the same as those of his possible sources.

Therefore, taking into account the results of Helmut Koester, John Dominic Crossan, and especially Marianne Sawicki's researches, it would be tempting to see in the most ancient layers of the pre-Markan passion story the work of a group of Jewish-Christian men and women belonging, in preference, to the Hellenistic party of the Jerusalem Church.[67] We could even ask the question if such a group claimed to be more under the patronage, for example, of the charisma of a Mary of Magdala rather

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66. See Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000), 143-7, 238-9 (note that Crossan too makes an appropriate reference to the female laments for Hector at the end of the *Iliad* [XXIV.723-775] in *The Birth of Christianity*, 534, 541).

67. A meticulous analysis of the characters described in the Markan passion leads Gerd Theissen to suggest a similar chronological bracket, somewhere in the 40s-50s, for its original composition; see his monograph, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991 [German original edition, 1989]), 166-99. Note that in spite of Crossan's wishful attempt to transfer Theissen's conclusions to the *Cross Gospel* (*The Birth of Christianity*, 504-6), in at least one case the actual *Gospel of Peter* does not fit the criterion of anonymity that Theissen applies to the characters of Mark, i.e., when it gives the name of the centurion in charge of guarding the sepulcher (8:31).

than that of a Peter or of a James.[68] Be that as it may, thanks to their decision to put the different elements of the passion traditions and discourses into a coherent narrative, the members of this group contributed to provide a theological meaning for the emotional shock of Jesus' death[69] – or to reduce, in social-scientific terms, the cognitive dissonance provoked by this highly traumatic event.[70]

III. The Final Triumph of the Failed Prophecy

At the end of the wide spectrum of the evolution of late-antique passion/resurrection stories, in the middle of the fifth or even in the sixth century, the *Book of the Cock* suggests other strategies of reading that are likely to produce a completely different effect on its readers or, more exactly, its audience. Its nar-

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68. Concerning the "historical" Mary of Magdala, see now the excellent summary of scholarly debate and new perspectives drawn by Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women in Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," in Ross S. Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, eds., *Women & Christian Origins* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105-28. For her reception in the apocryphal literature, see François Bovon, " Mary Magdalene in the *Acts of Philip*," in Jones, ed., *Which Mary?*, 75-89.

69. In this connection, especially noteworthy are the recent contributions of Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Genre of the Passion Narrative," *Studia Theologica* 47 (1993) 3-28; eadem, "From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994) 481-503; eadem, "Finding Meaning in the Death of Jesus," *The Journal of Religion* 78 (1998) 175-96, highlighting the relevance of the Biblical notions of sacrifice and vicarious suffering in the process of making Jesus' death more "noble" and acceptable to an early Christian audience.

70. This psychological phenomenon and its social consequences was at first recognized and studied by Leon Festinger and his collaborators; see Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 [first edition, 1956]); Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957). For the application of this model to early Christianity, see especially John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 37-49, 62-4 (even if Bruce J. Malina, "Normative Dissonance and Christian Origins," *Semeia* 35 [1986]: 35-59, subsequently has – in my opinion, wrongly – disputed the usefulness of such an approach). In order to have a good overview of the contemporary debate, see the studies collected in Jon R. Stone, ed., *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (New York/London: Routledge, 2000).

rative presents a truly topographic itinerary of the passion drama, with its characters – the good and the evil ones – its scenery, its miracles, and its relics.

As we have previously noted, here the reader is frequently made aware of the personal thoughts of the protagonist, a Jesus who, in spite of appearances, knows and manages every situation in advance.[71] Therefore, the reader is perfectly aware that Jesus is the Son of God who has agreed to become incarnate and sacrifice himself for the salvation of human race. He or she can now fully appreciate the spiritual significance of such a totally gracious act identifying in turn with Simon the Pharisee or his wife Akrosenna,[72] with the anonymous sinner of Bethany or the "great disciple" Peter, with the governor Pilate or his spouse Procla,[73] with the handsome John or the tearful Mary in despair,[74] or even with the good thief Demas. He or she can also be

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71. For other examples of internal focalization on Jesus, see *Book of the Cock* 3:18 ("the Lord Jesus had already understood that the disciples were deeply saddened because of the words about Judas that they had heard on the Mount of Olives"); 6:9 ("the Lord Jesus [...] was aware of the [bad] penchant [shared by all the members of Judas' family]"); 9:21 ("the Lord Jesus realized that his mother's heart was burning when she was weeping and shedding bitter tears, and he did not wish her to be there when they would give him gall and bitter vinegar to drink; neither did he want that she see when they would hit him with a spear, so that she would not die for it"); 10:5 ("the Lord Jesus was aware of all that would happen, and how they wanted to break his legs").

72. This is a new character that only appears in the *Book of the Cock* (see 2:6-9, 12-15; 4:1). Here, she plays the considerable part of an efficient woman, the hostess who receives Jesus and the disciples for the last supper in her home, not in Jerusalem but at Bethany.

73. In this connection, we should not forget that in the Near East Pilate and Procla have sometimes been canonized as the first Christian martyrs. Concerning the posthumous fate of this couple in Egypt, see Luisier, "De Pilate chez les Coptes," 411-21.

74. It is indeed in the *Book of the Cock*, in chapter 9, that Mary plays one of her first great roles as *Mater dolorosa*, which will be so popular in medieval piety from Byzantine liturgy to the York Mystery Plays. Thus, "[12] When our Lady, the Virgin Mary, saw her only son hung up on the wood of the cross, her eyes could not keep back the tears, her heart failed in her chest, and her soul was burned. [13] Life withdrew from her soul and her body as well, and all her limbs began to tremble. Her mind was darkened and her soul was on the point of leaving. Then, if her beloved son had not fortified her heart, her soul could have left her. [...] [17] When she saw that, our Lady Mary was distressed, and she knew no more where to go nor what to do. She was weeping near the cross, broken-hearted, and saying, 'Woe to me, my son, poor me! [18] Woe to my eyes that are seeing you even when they injure you, whereas you never done them harm but only good. So then, they put you with the bandits. However, those who are crucified with you, as for

scandalized and express all of his or her indignation at the recollection of the injuries and the sufferings inflicted on Jesus because of Judas Iscariot or Saul of Tarsus,[75] of Caiaphas and Annas or Herod Antipas, of the Roman soldiers or the Jewish population of Jerusalem, or even of the evil thief Gestas. This constant search to produce a dramatic effect on the reader represents the most salient narrative feature of this late apocryphal text.

In this connection, the most enlightening parallel is provided by the description of the Holy Week liturgy of Jerusalem during

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them, they committed shameful actions! [19] Come now, all you women who gave birth, in order to know the pains that my son is suffering, in order to weep with me for my son, born from me without impurity. [20] After having seen him with my own eyes, I can say, Receive, Lord, my soul, before my eyes see them slaughtering you and truly killing you, my son. For when I saw that they were torturing you and inflicting pain on you, the soul was at the point of leaving me because of you.'"

75. In the *Book of the Cock*, Saul (i.e., Paul) of Tarsus is the most ruthless persecutor of Jesus. He is the one who makes the preliminary agreement with Judas (4:15-16); he arrests Jesus and deals so harshly with him (5:11-16) that Jesus has to admonish him, "I warn you, Saul, you are going to cry on the last days for the evil that you have done to me" (5:14); he then brutally leads Jesus to the court (6:4); finally, he puts the crown of thorns on Jesus' head (8:32-33). This virulent anti-Paulinian attitude is one of the most intriguing archaic features of the *Book of the Cock*. Saul's ardor against Jesus is comparable to the impetuosity displayed by the "man who was the enemy" (i.e., Paul) against James the righteous, the brother of the Lord, at the end of the Jewish-Christian source incorporated in the first book of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (1.27-71). On this document and its Jewish-Christian outlook, see especially Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (trans. M. Eugen Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989 [original German edition, 1983]), 169-94, 296-304; Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series 112; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Society of Biblical Literature, Texts and Translations 37; Christian Apocrypha Series 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Luigi Cirillo, "L'antipaolinismo nelle Pseudoclementine: Un riesame della questione," in Giovanni Filoramo and Claudio Gianotto, eds., *Verus Israel: Nuove prospettive sul giudeocristianesimo. Atti del Colloquio di Torino (4-5 novembre 1999)* (Biblioteca di cultura religiosa 65; Brescia: Paideia, 2001), 280-303; Claudio Gianotto, "Alcune riflessioni a proposito di *Recognitiones* I, 27-71: La storia della salvezza," in Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones, eds., *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du Colloque de Jérusalem, 6-10 juillet 1998* (Lectio Divina, hors série; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 213-30; as well as the new French translation of André Schneider and Luigi Cirillo, *Les Reconnaissances du pseudo-Clément: Roman chrétien des premiers siècles* (Apocryphes 10; Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

the years 381-84, which Egeria the pilgrim recorded in her famous *Travels to the Holy Land* (30:1-38:2).[76] She recounts that on Holy Wednesday evening, in front of the screen of the Anastasis basilica as a presbyter reads the Gospel passage about Judas' betrayal, "the people groan and lament at this reading in a way that would make you weep to hear them" (34).[77] In the same way, on Good Friday before dawn at Gethsemane, "by the time" the passage about Jesus' arrest "has been read everyone is groaning and lamenting and weeping so loud that people even across in the city can probably hear it all" (36:3).[78] Later, during the day from twelve to three o'clock, in a courtyard between the Anastasis and the Golgotha hillock, with the help of a series of cross-readings – "all about the things Jesus suffered" – taken from the Psalms, the Prophets and the New Testament writings, "they are teaching the people that nothing which took place had not been foretold, and all that was foretold was completely fulfilled" (37:5-6).[79] Then, Egeria goes on with the following comments: "It is impressive to see the way all the people are moved by these readings, and how they mourn. You could hardly believe how every single one of them weeps during the three hours, old and young alike, because of the manner in which the Lord suffered for us" (37:7).

Between the quest for a theological meaning that characterizes the most ancient passion narrative anterior to Mark 14-16 and the search for a dramatic effect that is typical of the *Book of the Cock*, four to five centuries passed. The spiritual comfort brought to a small dissident and persecuted community has given way to the management of the emotional itinerary of the pilgrims during the Holy Week in Jerusalem.[80] Of course, the

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76. All the passages are taken from John C. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House; Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1981), 134, 136-8.

77. According to the *Old Armenian Lectionary* published by Athanase Renoux, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121*, vol. 2 (Patrologia Orientalis 36.2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 127, the reading in question is Matthew 26:3-16 or 14-16.

78. Still according to the *Old Armenian Lectionary* (Renoux, *Le Lectionnaire de Jérusalem*, 139), this reading is Matthew 26:31-56 or 36-56.

79. It is needless to say that the fulfillment of the scriptural prophecies at the moment of the passion of Christ is also one of the most recurring themes in the *Book of the Cock* (see 1:3, 17; 4:2; 5:21; 7:5; 10:2, 7; as well as the variant reading in 5:32).

80. See the excellent syntheses provided by John C. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977); E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Pierre Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages*

difference at the level of the narrative perspectives reflects other major changes that have occurred, since the middle of the first century, in the social and cultural horizons of the Mediterranean world in Late Antiquity. In the final analysis, such a contrast perfectly symbolizes the continuity and the hiatus that separate the original intent and the actual realization of early Christianity.

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d'Orient: histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe (Cerf-Histoire; Paris: Cerf, 1985); and Claudine Dauphin, *La Palestine byzantine: peuplement et populations*, 3 vols. (BAR International Series 726; Oxford: Archaeopress, 1998).